

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

VLR: 01/05/71 NRHP: 07/02/71
(Type all entries = complete applicable sections)

Virginia

COUNTY:

Rockbridge

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

Alexander-Withrow House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Alexander-Withrow House

2. LOCATION

REFERENCE AND NUMBER:

N corner of Main St. and Washington St.

CITY OR TOWN:

Lexington

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY:

Rockbridge

CODE

163

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

(Check One)

- ☐ District ☒ Building
☐ Site ☐ Structure
☐ Object

OWNERSHIP

- ☐ Public
☒ Private
☐ Both

Public Acquisition:

- ☐ In Process
☐ Being Considered

STATUS

- ☒ Occupied
☐ Unoccupied
☐ Preservation work
in progress

ACCESSIBLE
TO THE PUBLIC

- Yes:
☐ Restricted
☐ Unrestricted
☒ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Agricultural ☐ Government ☐ Park ☐ Transportation ☐ Comments
☒ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Private Residence ☐ Other (Specify)
☐ Educational ☐ Military ☐ Religious
☐ Entertainment ☐ Museum ☐ Scientific

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Historic Lexington Foundation

STREET AND NUMBER:

Box 612

CITY OR TOWN:

Lexington

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Rockbridge County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Lexington

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY:

1957

☒ Federal

☐ State

☐ County

☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

D.

CODE

11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Virginia

Rockbridge

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located diagonally across from the Rockbridge County Court House on a busy intersection in the heart of town, the Alexander-Withrow House sets the tone for much of the historic flavor of Lexington. The present picturesque appearance of the house is the result of a number of alterations, the most major of which occurred in the 1850's when the level of the adjacent streets was lowered ten feet. This change in level resulted in the main floor of the house becoming the second floor set on a full story of limestone underpinning. This street level, with its large windows and fine stonework has long been rented out to retail shops. The original main entrance to the house now opens onto a small balcony with a decorative cast-iron balustrade supported on large cast-iron brackets. At some point during the mid-nineteenth century, the present shallow hipped roof with its deep Italianate bracketed cornice was placed on the house. The exact form of the original roof is uncertain, but it is thought to have been a gable roof. The position of the four corner chimneys has not been changed, although the shafts may have been lowered. The most conspicuous feature of the house is the brick walls set with glazed headers to form a diaper pattern throughout. Although an original opening in the center of the side wall on the second floor level has been bricked up, the walls survive generally unscarred. Most of the sash in the house is old, and nearly all of it on the third floor is original. A later one-story wooden gallery has been placed across the rear wall and overlooks a narrow areaway.

The interior of the building has been altered with the changing of some of the partitions, but much of the original woodwork survives, including a fine but compact Federal type stair. Most of the interior trim is quite simple.

After standing in a state of poor repair for many years, the house has recently been renovated by the Historic Lexington Foundation.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian ☐ 16th Century ☒ 18th Century ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century ☐ 17th Century ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Alexander-Withrow House was built for a prominent Lexington merchant, William Alexander, around 1790. The house was built on lots purchased by Alexander from the trustees of Lexington in 1784, when the town was originally laid out. In 1800, the house was bought from the Alexander estate by John Leyburn. One of the Leyburn children who grew up in the house presented a romantic picture of it when he wrote:

It was square, hip-roofed, with a tall chimney towering up from each corner and built of brick, some of which were glazed and set in the wall as to form a succession of diamonds. . . . The old house was in most respects a pleasant abode. Its apartments, for that day, seemed spacious and airy; the prospect of the surrounding hills and majestic mountains was beautiful and grand and the great piles of glazing hickory on the capacious hearth glowed with comfort and cheerfulness, as we gathered around it.

The house remained in the Leyburn family until 1851, when it was purchased by George A. Baker. In 1901, it became the property of the Withrow family, and it remained in their possession until 1969, when it was acquired by the Historic Lexington Foundation.

The Alexander-Withrow House survives as one of the oldest dwellings in Lexington and one of the most interesting architecturally. It is believed that it is the only house in the center of town to have escaped the disastrous fire which swept the village in 1796. The well-defined diaper pattern in the brick walls is an unusual feature for its time and place, and it is thought that this is the only example of such work in the Shenandoah Valley. Equally interesting are the four corner chimneys. Corner chimneys of this type occur on a few other late-eighteenth century Rockbridge County houses, but this motif has not been observed elsewhere in Virginia.

The association of the Alexander-Withrow House with several old Lexington families, together with its conspicuous location and unusual architectural features combine to make the structure one of the most prominent and cherished of Lexington landmarks.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Boley, Henry. Lexington in Old Virginia. Richmond: Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1936.

"The Withrow House". Unpublished data sheets from Historic Lexington Foundation.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0			0			37°	47'	08"
NE	0			0			79°	26'	31"
SE	0			0					
SW	0			0					

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than 10 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

December 9, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:

Room 1116, Ninth Street Office Building

CITY OR TOWN:

Richmond

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name

Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman
Title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

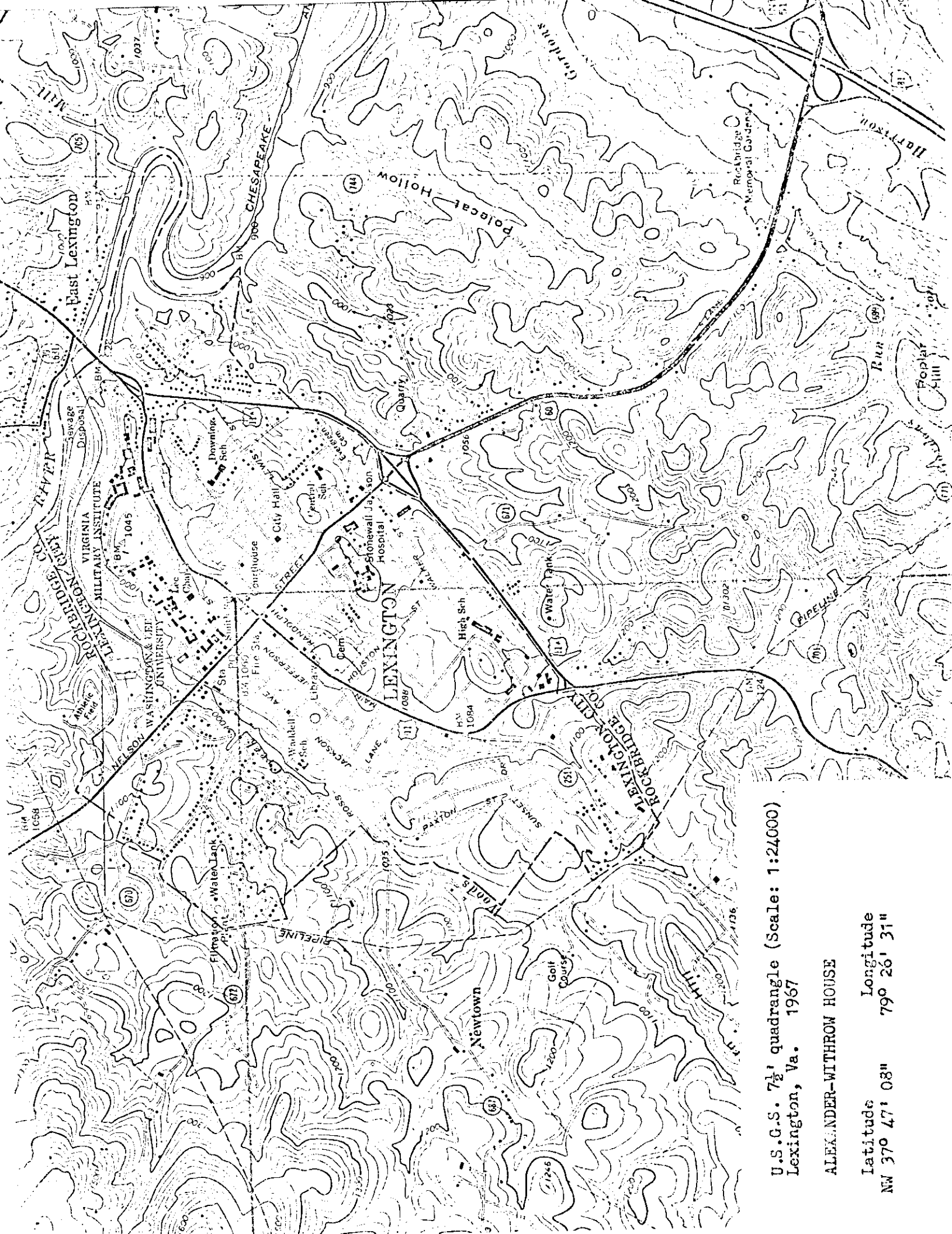
Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (Scale: 1:24000)
Lexington, Va. 1967

ALEXANDER-WITHROW HOUSE

Latitude	Longitude
NW 37° 47' 08"	79° 26' 31"